

Washington, DC - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) tonight released the following statement in response to President Bush's address to the nation on Iraq.

"President Bush just doesn't get it. He does not understand the scope and the dynamics of the disaster he's created in Iraq. First of all, what the president calls a new plan for Iraq is not new at all. It's more of the same failed policy that has resulted in the deaths of more than 3,000 American troops, injuries to tens of thousands of others, and the deaths of perhaps hundreds of thousands of innocent Iraqi civilians, while creating utter chaos in Iraq. There have been previous escalations in troops to the level the president is now talking about as new, including an increase to 160,000 American troops in Iraq in the fall of 2005 around the time of the constitutional referendum and parliamentary elections. As we've seen with those previous troop level spikes, an increase in the number of troops in Iraq is not the answer that will lead to long-term peace and stability in that country. The president is once again continuing his falsification of information about Iraq in order to advance his political needs rather than acting in the best interest of the American people and our troops.

"Plain and simple, no additional U.S. troops should be sent to Iraq and the responsible phased withdrawal of troops must begin. A recently released National Intelligence Estimate, the findings of the Iraq Study Group, and the military's top Middle East commander, General John P. Abizaid, have all said that an escalation of U.S. troops is not the answer and would instead incite more violence in Iraq by acting as a magnet and a call to arms for insurgents.

"The only possible course for peace and stability in Iraq is through diplomacy -- something President Bush has said takes too long. The president, however, forgets that military action in Iraq has been going on for nearly four years now. There is no question that the diplomatic approach to the situation in Iraq is exactly the way to go. We must engage in diplomatic discussions with the different sects in Iraq and neighboring countries to find common ground from which to move forward. More troops is not the answer. The idea of increasing the number of military personnel in Iraq is reminiscent of what happened in Vietnam. Presidents Johnson and Nixon said the answer was to increase the number of troops and it didn't solve the problem.

"My colleagues and I in Congress will aggressively fight any increase in troop levels in Iraq. I am cosponsoring legislation that would prevent any escalation of troops in Iraq unless Congress approves such an increase. We cannot allow President Bush to operate as if he were king. This is a democracy with checks and balances after all, and the Congress must have a voice. The only new policy for Iraq should be one that winds down our military presence in that country to

bring our troops home, while opening up avenues of diplomacy that can ultimately lead to peace and stability in the region."